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# THE ARTIST

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## The American Survey

Edited by Charles H. Caffin

### OUR EXHIBIT AT THE PARIS EXPOSITION

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THERE can be no question as to the strength and dignity of the exhibit in the American section of the Beaux Arts. The most casual visitor to the Exposition can hardly fail to appreciate the quiet, harmonious effect of the decorations and fittings, the care with which the various works are presented, and the air of distinction which is felt throughout the American galleries. The walls have been lined with a dull-green fabric, specially designed, and surmounted by a simple frieze, combining the national monogram and wreaths. Settees, covered with velvet, occupy the middle of every room, each constructed to set off to best advantage the small piece of sculpture which is placed upon its centre. Handsome cases of carved oak, with glass sides and tops, contain the miniatures, and appropriate supports have been devised for the various small pieces of sculpture contained in the corridor, upon the walls of which are arranged, in a most striking fashion, the exhibits of architecture and illustrations. At the entrance to the galleries stands a copy of the Shaw Memorial, at Boston, forming an impressive object from almost all points of view, and establishing a note of dignity which is maintained throughout the galleries. Thus, in the matter of installation, our exhibit is pre-eminent. The immense French section is necessarily more imposing and the German one more pretentious; but for a tasteful *tout ensemble*, wherein the decorations are kept in proper subservience to the works of art, we must look in the American. It is not unusual to hear the exclamation made by a visitor upon entering it, "How restful!" And that is precisely the effect obtained. Here, as elsewhere, there is nothing to distract attention from the exhibits, and the latter are found to

be in remarkable accord with one another, so excellently are they disposed.

When one considers the strength of the exhibit, there is the same occasion for congratulation. "Ah! but these Americans are strong," was the exclamation of M. Jules Breton, as he, in company with the rest of the jury, made their first visit to our section. In the French one, obviously, there is much strength; but often a superabundance of it, expressing itself in gigantic canvases and wild display of passions, interspersed also with a great deal that is quite commonplace; for in the vast French galleries, occupying one-half of the entire palace, every sort of merit is represented. In the other foreign sections also the impression is of a series of spasmodic effects, which thump themselves upon one's attention. In ours the feeling of strength is controlled and much more diffused. And we may be all the more proud of this, for the exhibit does not represent us at our best. In these big international shows all sorts of compromises come in to interfere with adequate representation. Some painters hold aloof, fearing to be lost in the *mélange*; others, for various causes, are not signalized by their best work. We, who know, can only note these discrepancies from what we hoped for with regret; and yet, even so, the exhibit is a strong one.

Its strength is, moreover, an entirely artistic one; relying, not upon big and stirring subjects, but upon depth of purpose and painter-like qualities in the execution. These men thoroughly understand their craft; they know how to paint, and, more than that, they use their knowledge, or the majority of them do, with serious artistic intentions. Such a great, amorphous, world-wide show as the present brings this point home very clearly. What is conspicuous everywhere is the lack of conviction represented. As the Pharisees of old "compassed sea and land to make one prose-

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lyte," so the majority of painters to-day seem to be cudgeling their brains for something to paint by which they may make a sensation. Not to make a sensation is to be lost in the crowd. They have learned how to speak without having anything to say. In the American exhibit, on the contrary, there is a suggestion that there is something which had to be said and the means have been found to say it. Of course, this is not universally true, but there is enough of such work to stamp its *cachet* upon the whole, and it was worth while to come all these many thousand miles and to wade through many hundred feet of bathos to acquire this realization.

Another point, satisfactorily demonstrated, is that the credit of American art is maintained by the painters who live in America as well as by those who have established themselves in Europe. This is no news to the readers of THE ARTIST, though it seems to be a point not acknowledged by the Franco-American painters. They have tried to pose for a long time as the real representatives of American art; or, at least, to be accurate, a certain section of them have done so. But inquiry upon the spot discovers the fact that these active pushers of their own wares and disparagers of others' are not the men who are recognized over here as doing work of any considerable account. They are rather men who, for the best of reasons, make but slight impression and have seized upon the occasion of this Exposition to try and push themselves to the front at the expense of the painters in America. Thanks, however, to the sturdy attitude of the Director of Fine Arts, Mr. John B. Cauldwell, and the members of the Hanging Committee, who have been loyal to the interests of American art as a whole, the machinations of these gentlemen, while causing much temporary annoyance, have not interfered materially with the *tout ensemble*.

On the other hand, those non-resident Americans whose work really counts have kept outside of these cabals. There was no need for them to push their pictures to the front; they were, as a matter of course, sought after, and affect largely the dignity of the whole exhibit. For example, there are three of Sargent's portraits: That of the London picture dealer with the black poodle, and that

of a lady in pink silk dress, holding out her hand to her two children, who stand behind the sofa, seen at the exhibition in Boston—the names of both these escape me and are not included in the official catalogue—and his later one of the President of Bryn Mawr College. The last shows up here far more effectively than it did in the Exhibition of the Pennsylvania Academy, and reveals itself a superb portrait. Of the extraordinary rendering of character in the poodle picture and the decorative qualities of the other there is no need to speak further on the present occasion. They have been noticed in previous numbers of THE ARTIST. By Whistler also there are three portraits. Two of them are high narrow panels containing life-size figures; one of himself, almost full face, with an overcoat thrown around the shoulders, its edges held together by one hand; the other of a lady, three-quarters back view, with the face seen over the right shoulder. Both are in blacks and dark grays, gloomily impressive sketches. The third picture, however, is carried to a finish, and represents a young lady in white muslin dress standing with her left arm resting on a white marble mantelpiece, her face reflected in the mirror. The masterly management of the various values, especially in the whites, and the gracious sentiment in the girl's figure and expression, make it one of those Whistlers that one would like to see again and again. Alexander Harrison is represented by two marines, "Twilight" and "Mysteries of Night," and by a landscape, "Sun Fires," in which earth and sky are alight with rosy flames. The first named pleases me most, showing with much tenderness the soft play of waning light upon shallow water, spreading like transparent silk over the sand.

From John W. Alexander come three pictures new to us at home. "The Mother," perhaps, is the most satisfactory. She is sitting on a sofa and bending over an infant that lies upon its back, the subject being treated in cool grays and greens, very shrewdly lighted with a silvery light, and, as usual, thinly painted upon rough canvas. Another picture, "Autumn," is a decorative panel in low-toned colors, and with considerable sweep of line and handsomeness of form; while his third is

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a "Portrait of Rodin." This is a large canvas, and the figure, seen from the knees up, is set in profile on the lower right of the frame, an arrangement that seems a little affected, whereas the portrait is very strong and dignified. The most important example by Abbey is his "Hamlet," seen not very long ago in America. It does not make a very impressive showing on this occasion, its lack of tonal quality keeping it apart from its companions, while, neither in interest of subject nor in painter-like qualities of execution has it authority enough to enforce its solitariness. By William T. Dannat are two characteristic portraits, respectively of the "Duchess of Mecklenburg" and of "Miss C.," handsome pictures, but certainly not representing him in his most accomplished manner, and by Frank D. Millet, "The Expansionist," seen last season in America. We have also recently seen two out of Gari Melcher's three exhibits, "The Professor of Fencing" and the portrait of a man in a cloak buttoning his glove. He shows also a quaint subject, "The Sisters," an older girl and a child in a Dutch scene. All are strong, straightforward works, which forbid us to search for any very deep qualities either of intention or handling. I. Humphreys-Johnston is represented by a pleasing portrait of his mother and by an ideal subject, "The Mystery of Night." It is necessary only to enumerate a few of the other exhibits from foreign Americans: George Hitchcock's "Magnificat" and "Conquered"; H. S. Bisbing's "Cattle"; Walter Gay's "Maternity" and "The Spinners"; Ridgway Knight's "July Morning"; Walter Mac Ewen's "Portrait," "Sunday in Holland" and "Pieter van Wint"; Jules Stewart's "Nymphes de Nysa" and "The Laughing Girl"; Julian Story's "Columbine"; Mrs. MacMonnies's "Lilies and Roses," and three Eastern pictures by Edwin Lord Weeks. Eugène Vail has an "Evening in Brittany," women walking upon the quay, which merits more than passing notice, while H. O. Tanner shows a "Daniel in the Lion's Den," a large and gloomy composition, in every way inferior to his recent pictures exhibited in America.

Turning now to the painters resident in the States and commencing with those repre-

sented by portraits or figure compositions, we find the dignity of the galleries materially influenced by Cecilia Beaux, Frank W. Benson, J. Carroll Beckwith, William M. Chase, Thomas Eakins, George de Forest Brush, Abbott Thayer, Emund C. Tarbell and Joseph de Camp. Miss Beaux has three portraits: "Miss Fisher"; "Mother and Son," where the latter is sitting near a piano in the back of the picture, and "Mother and Daughter," which took the gold medal at Pittsburgh. Without doubt the last named is the best work and it shows up here most grandly, with an individual dignity that would make itself felt wherever it might be hung. Mr. Chase's "Lady in a White Shawl" makes a most distinguished showing, and in a less degree Mr. Beckwith's "Portrait of Mrs. Beckwith," though it is not in the same class as those previously named. Two renderings of "Mother and Child," the one owned by the Pennsylvania Academy and the other a winner of the Temple gold medal, show what one may call this particular vein of Mr. Brush at its best; but a little picture called "The Artist," in which the father is represented drawing his family, is preferable, it seems to me, from an artistic point of view. Of all the Brushes I have seen it is the one I should most desire to possess. Mr. Camp shows the nude which now belongs to the Cincinnati Art Museum, and Mr. Tarbell, another nude, sitting near a Venetian blind, "La Jalousie." The best by Thomas Eakins is the "'Cello Player," and by Frank W. Benson that charming open-air study of children, called "The Sisters." Abbott Mayer's "Virgin Enthroned" forms without doubt one of the most impressive accents in the exhibit. Its elevation of feeling and the fine quality of color, notably in the green robe of the Virgin, give it an unmistakable distinction. His "Brother and Sister" also stands out well, but the "Young Woman," notwithstanding its serene dignity, does not count for so much on this occasion. It is so obviously less sincere in motive and sound in method. The "Violin Player," by Wilton Lockwood, is too modest in its self-control to make its influence felt beyond its own frame, but within it the picture is full of distinction and beauty.

So much for the portrait and figure painters.

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I have mentioned those residing in America whose work has greatest weight in this exhibition; among the names of the foreign Americans the reader for himself can pick out those upon whom devolves the chief dignity. In referring now to the landscapes and marines I reach a department which, I believe, more than any other, makes our exhibit noteworthy. In the sections of the other countries I have been surprised at the paucity of landscapes. Scattered through the great French exhibit there are many, but they do not make as considerable a mark as was to be expected. With one exception, however, and that is in the French retrospective exhibit, where one gallery is practically devoted to the work of Monet, Pissarro, Sisley and Renoir. It consists mainly of landscapes and presents an *ensemble* of virile and accomplished work that makes this gallery, perhaps, the most perfectly artistic in the whole Exposition. But, this apart, the showing made by our men is so strong in landscape, and the amount of it is proportionately so large, that it forms the distinctive feature. And yet it includes neither all our best landscapists nor even the best work in every case of those represented. For instance, there is nothing by Tryon, nothing by Twachtman, for which omission, as I understand it, they themselves are responsible. On the other hand, the "Ploughing in Springtime," by Horatio Walker, while it is one of those pictures that draws you across the gallery to examine it, is not this painter's work at its latest best. However, included in this exhibition are J. Alden Weir's beautifully subtle "Repose at Midday"; Charles H. Woodbury's "A Rock in the Sea"—I am mentioning them at random—Edward M. Taber's "Mount Mansfield in Winter"; Leonard Ochtman's "Winter Morning," a most beautiful example, and his less completely satisfactory "Autumn," shown at Philadelphia. By Winslow Homer are "The Coast of Maine" and "Summer Night," as well as his "All's Well," and that remarkably impressive, almost tragic, picture of the "Fox Chase," owned by the Pennsylvania Academy. There is an example of J. Elmer Schofield at

his best, "Night in January," and two by Louis Paul Dessar, good, but not so good as he has done, "Sheep upon the Dunes" and "Evening in Picardy"; a particularly beautiful one of Ben Foster, "Cradled by the Murmuring Stream"; that strong marine by Frederick W. Kost, "Old Dock at New Dorp," and an excellent example by Robert C. Minor, most poetical and fairly faithful to nature. "Becky Cole's Hill," by Henry W. Ranger, shows to fine advantage, and there is a "Winter," by Charles A. Platt, more interesting than usual. Walter Clark is most happily represented by "A New England Village"; Bruce Crane by his subtle and beautiful "Signs of Spring"; Charles H. Davis by two strong pieces, "Summer Evening" and "Clouds on Water"; George H. Bogert by that striking picture, "Sea and Rain," while characteristic examples are shown by Gedney Bunce, Ralph A. Blakelock and William M. Chase.

So far, with the exception of Mr. Taber, I have mentioned only living painters, leaving to the end the trio of dead ones—George Inness, Homer D. Martin and Alexander Wyant. I need hardly say what distinction the works of these lend to our galleries, but have preferred to emphasize the virile and individual work that is being accomplished by those painters now living, a large proportion of whom are still quite young.

We shall await with great interest the announcement of the awards, but meanwhile may rest assured that no country is more satisfactorily represented in its picture show than our own.



FREDERICK EDWIN CHURCH is dead, and America has lost one of her best landscape painters. He was born in 1826, at Hartford, Conn. He was elected a member of the National Academy in 1849. His best known works were "The Heart of the Andes," "The Great Fall of Niagara," "On the Cordilleras," "Morning," "The Icebergs" and "Moonlight Under the Tropics."